



"And the Spirit moved on the face of the waters"

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INTO THE ARCHIVES NO. 9

What follows is the concluding article of Arn Vagts' two-part series on "locked up positions." (See Hoosier Archives #40 for the first one.) Together, they make very interesting reading. Also at this time, I would like to plug a future write-up Arn will do soon on 1971CC, a telephone game he is GMing in Los Angeles. Arn will publish a complete write-up on the game with moves, maps and a player-CM analysis. The whole thing will be about 40-50 pages long and will sell for 50¢ and 16¢ postage (all can be paid in stamps). If interested, write: Arnold Vagts, 2824 Verano Place, Irvine, California 92662.

YOU HAVE A LOCKED UP POSITION, SO NOW WHAT?

by

Arnold E. Vagts, Jr.

The cost of first seeking a Locked Up Position (LUP) and then trying for a win may be too great. Anything which reduces the probability of a win should be avoided even if you subscribe to the "Surviving is better than being eliminated" theory. (There are a number of people who believe this theory is nonsense; these people are called "insane.")

A LUP should NOT have been attempted if to accomplish it you had to:

- (1) Break up a possibly winning coalition,
- (2) Force another power block to form to get a LUP.
- (3) Weaken a country to the point that another country can win or get a LUP.
- (4) Alienate countries to the point that another country can win or get a LUP.

The second situation above tends heavily towards draws by the formation of very tight alliances which are impossible to break up. I've been a survivor in several face-to-face games in which two power blocks formed, each consisting of two countries sharing a LUP; no country was willing to attack his ally for fear of losing his LUP and being eliminated by the other power block. This was discussed in great detail in one of the games and each of the major countries in the opposing power blocks agreed to attack his minor ally provided the other did so first; neither was willing to take the initial risk, consequently the game ended with four unhappy players in a four-way draw. This is the equivalent of playing "chicken": "I won't break up my LUP coalition until you do, and if you don't, you can't win." This argument is, of course, symmetric.

If another country gets a LUP, he may be satisfied with a draw and be unwilling to risk his LUP for an increased probability of a win. You can still win, but the probability of your doing so is considerably less once another country gets a LUP. If another country has gotten a LUP, you are not a "great" player. (Although you may still be a "good" player.)

Once you get a LUP, your first diplomatic act will be an attempt to get all of the other countries to attack your largest opponent (why not dream ELG?) in return for non-aggression from you; if pressed, offer an alliance. Point out to them that it is futile to attack you since you have a LUP; on the other hand, you are willing to assist them and they have a chance to make gains. Suggest specific tactics and show how they succeed (not everyone will be persuaded by your flowery oratory alone.)

If your largest opponent has a LUP as well, you still want to get all of the other

countries to ally with you--it's just more difficult. First, no one may realize your opponent has a LUP (even himself!). Moral: if you have a strong defense which can't be broken, let the countries with whom you wish to ally know about it (remember the RUS defense system in "Dr. Strangelove"?). If the other countries point out to you that your opponent also has a LUP, tell them that he doesn't know it, or if he has been wise enough to have already told them (your strategy is symmetric: whatever you can do, he can also do), you can tell them that he will probably "botch" it due to poor tactical skill or a habit of missing moves. If you have to fib (contrary to popular opinion, a fib is not a lie but merely a statement whose correspondence to a real space-time sequence of events is non-existent) a little about your opponent's skill, do so carefully and in a believable manner.

If the minor countries actually do make gains against the other major country, you can afford to sit back and be content with lining up your forces for THE BIG PUSH; very mild pressure should be exerted on the minor countries to give you a supply center now and then but don't press them or get greedy (it has been my experience to observe more outright wins thrown away by CUPIDITY than by any other trait among experienced players). Continue to negotiate in detail with minor countries offering second place in return for helping you win. Be honest and keep your treaties if at all possible--your offers will be more credible and more likely to be accepted. It requires more skill to win without stabbing so try for that kind of win. Take advantage of stabs in a game to spread distrust among the other countries. A player's stabbing indicates to me that his negotiating ability has failed him (there are some, however, who stab merely for the pleasure of it--these people are called "criminally insane"). Honesty represents long-term policy; reputations spread fast.

If the minor countries do not make gains against your opponent, you have an excuse (as differentiated from the reason, which must always be that it increases your probability for a win /this, of course, is a simplification: some odd players do it to get even/) to attack them ("Everybody has to attack somebody, eh?" said with a sheepish grin, or "What else could I do?") even if it is purely offensive, e.g. Israel's "preemptive" strike in the Six Days War. You may eliminate them and outright win since their units will be deployed against the other major country.

If you haven't won yet, you have one last stratagem to employ before you must ally with the other major country: see if any of the remaining minor countries will throw supply centers to you for money. When this stratagem (or your money) has been exhausted, you are forced to ally with the other major country(s); you are in the situation that is unfortunate: everyone is against you. You may still win if you can get an ally. The worst you will get is second and that is better than a four- or five-way draw.

It was my experience once as AUS to be stabbed by RUS and FRA (ITA and GER were almost eliminated) while fighting TUR. FRA attacked because he knew ENG and RUS were VERY strongly allied and were going to attack AUS; he was afraid to attack ENG because of the alliance and thought he could get a piece of the AUS pie. Fortunately FRA stabbed with a spoon and TUR allied with AUS against RUS so that RUS ended up losing one supply center while AUS maintained nine (although they weren't the same ones since the RUS-ENG alliance took two). FRA was not one of the "great" tacticians of all time and after being stopped on the ITA front, finally agreed to attack ENG. Moral: (1) The strongest "power" was not AUS but the ENG-RUS coalition. The very fact that they were strongly allied should have forced FRA to honor his AUS treaty and attack ENG, otherwise the situation could only get worse for FRA (ENG would very shortly attack him since he had no place else to grow). (2) AUS had the wrong ally in RUS (against TUR) since he didn't know about the ENG-RUS strong alliance. AUS should have assisted TUR against RUS. (3) If you are going to alienate (stab) a former ally, do not underestimate his ability to ally with former mutual enemies (after all, what else can he do?). (4) Do not stab if you have only spoons at your disposal, i.e., know where the rest of the silverware is and how to use it, especially the knives.

Steady now, lads! On the next page lurks that Anti-Dippy 'zine for Dippy widows--Maorg-Oldid! Read it if you dare, but be sure to pass it on to your wife. Our spies have informed us that sometimes these Anti-Dippy remarks are hidden from the Diplomacy widow involved (something about "not wanting to incite further riots...".....)

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